To the honourable the Commons of Great-Britain, in Parliament assembled.

The humble PETITION *of the merchants, traders, and others, of the city of London, concerned in the commerce of North-America,*

SHEWETH,

THAT your petitioners did, on Monday the 23d instant, present an humble petition to this honourable house, stating the nature and importance of the commerce between Great-Britain and America. The repeated interruptions which of late years have happened therein: the alarming state to which that commerce is at present reduced; and the true cause, as your petitioners apprehend, of the same: and relying on the justice of this honourable house to take the whole of the weighty matters so stated into their most serious consideration, did humbly pray, that this house would enter into a full and immediate examination of that system of commercial policy which had formerly been adopted and uniformly maintained to the happiness and advantage of both countries, and would apply such healing remedies, as can alone restore and establish the commerce between Great-Britain and America, on a permanent foundation.

Your petitioners have ever conceived an opinion, resulting from education and confirmed by reason and experience, that the connection between Great-Britain and America originally was and ought to be, of a commercial kind; and that the benefits derived therefrom to the mother country are of the same nature. And observing the constant attention which the British legislature has for more than a century given to these valuable objects, they have been taught to admire the regulations, by which that connection had been preserved, and those benefits secured, as the most effectual institution which human wisdom could have framed for those salutary purposes; presuming therefore, on this opinion and supported by this observation your petitioners beg leave to represent to this honourable house, that the fundamental policy of those laws of which they complain, and the propriety of enforcing, relaxing or amending the same, are questions inseparably united with the commerce between Great-Britain and America; and consequently, that the consideration of the one cannot be entered on without a full discussion of the other.

Your petitioners observe, by the votes of this honourable house, that a committee hath been appointed, to take into consideration certain papers, presented to this house, before Christmas, on Thursday, the 19th instant; and by the titles and dates of said papers and in particular of No. 148 and 149 of the same: Your petitioners are warranted in presuming, that the said papers contain matters respecting the present situation of America, and essentially concerning the mutual interests of your petitioners, and that country.

Under all these circumstances your petitioners find reason sincerely to lament that this honourable house has thought fit to refer the consideration of their said petition to any other committee than that to which the said papers had previously been referred; and your petitioners conceive that by the resolution to which this house hath come respecting the reference of their said petition, they are absolutely precluded from the benefit of such a meeting, in support of their said petition, as could alone secure them that relief which the importance and present deplorable state of their trade require.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray this honourable house, that they will take the premises into their immediate consideration, and will direct, that your petitioners may be heard by themselves, or their agents, in support of their said former petition; and that no resolution respecting America, may be taken by this honourable house, or by any committee thereof until your petitioners shall have been fully heard in support of their said petition.

Published by authority of the committee,

Jan. 26. THOMAS LANE, Chairman.

Jan. 28. Yesterday the committee of merchants, traders and others, concerned in the American commerce, attended at the house of commons and the house having resolved itself into a committee of the whole house, according to the order of Monday last, Mr. Thomas Wooldridge, one of the committee of American merchants, was called to the bar when he addressed the committee in the following words:

"I am directed by the committee of merchants, traders, and others of the city of London, concerned in the commerce of America, to represent to this honourable committee, that merchants revealing at this bar the state of their affairs, is a measure which all would wish to avoid, unless upon such great occasions as the present, when the public weal is evidently at stake, when their duty as good subjects requires it of them; but when the mode of examination is such as totally precludes them from answering the great public object (which in their opinion, is clearly the case at present) they beg leave humbly to signify, that they wave appearing before the committee which has been appointed, and that the merchants are not under any apprehensions respecting their American debts, unless the means of remittance should be cut off by measures that may be adopted in Great-Britain."

Feb. 8. Any vacancies that death may make among the officers that are gone or going to act against the Americans, are to be immediately filled up by serjeants and corporals, and the common soldiers will all have a chance of promotion in this expedition. By this story the soldiers are all in high spirits, and very glad of the opportunity of leaving England and peace.

Orders are sent to Woolwich for a train of artillery to be got ready with all expedition to be shipped with the troops destined for Boston.

March 4. We hear a motion of the first importance will be made in the house of lords, in the course of the next week, by one of the leading members of administration.

March 7. We hear from good authority, that it is intended to put the refractory colonies under military government, and to grant especial charters and privileges to those of them that are obedient.

It is reported that the ministry have received some accounts of a very alarming nature from the British minister at Versailles, of the designs of that court in conjunction with the court of Madrid.

March 8. A very full and late house is expected this day in the house of commons, as the Massachusett's-Bay fishery bill is to be read a third time. When the amendments to this bill were reported and agreed to on Monday last those for the bill expatiated on the necessity of the measure, as the only moderate means of bringing the disobedient provinces to a sense of their duty, without involving the empire in a civil war; and said, that the Americans would not be deprived of any one right whatsoever; that the fishery belonged to Britain; that permission to fish was a matter of indulgence; that those who, by their dutiful and obedient conduct, might deserve such an indulgence, would certainly have it, and those who did not, could not, with justice, complain, because they would thereby be stripped of no property, nor deprived of any privilege; for if they were miserable or distressed, it was beyond question clear, that it could only proceed from their own choice — To this it was answered, that the bill would not serve any one purpose for which it was framed; and even if it should, it would be fraught with every degree of injustice, bad policy, and cruelty, that was possible to enter into the mind of man to conceive.—Mr. Burke observed, that we were now blindly rushing on to ruin and destruction; we were wantonly and passionately doing what we never could again undo. The fishery is now in being, says he; we may, nay indeed, we must, if the present measures be adopted, certainly annihilate it. The most abject, insignificant, and worthless person that ever breathed, may murder a man, but the greatest collective body that ever met cannot restore him to life; just so it will be with your Newfoundland fishery; destroy, or even interrupt it once, and you will never again be able to make it return into its former channels. But even supposing that you should embark heartily in the cause, however impracticable such a scheme in many other respects may be, will any man conversant in the extent of the fishery, the numerous conveniences &c. the New-England men have of carrying it on, pretend to say, that the facts endeavoured to be established this day at your bar deserve a moment's serious consideration; when it is notorious that 500,000l. must be advanced in this trade before any return whatever can be made?

He expatiated largely on the direful effects this bill must produce in those places, where both their food and all the means of procuring it, depended on the fishery; famine in such an event, he said, must be inevitable; and whether it would not be more humane to butcher them at once, than to starve them by a designed and pre-determined famine, could hardly admit of a question. He observed, that it had been much relied on by the gentlemen on the other side, that the respective governors were invested with a power to prevent the evils predicted, should the present bill be passed into a law; but this he contended was by no means the case, particularly in Connecticut and Rhode Island, where the governors not being appointed by the crown, were precluded from exercising that discretionary power on which the friends of the bill offered to defend its justice and practicability. In short, he concluded his speech with bestowing on the bill almost every opprobrious epithet in the English language; observing, that it was the blackest, most tyrannic, and oppressive act, that ever passed. The lord advocate of Scotland closed the debate. He owned that the constitution of the colonies was formed on the same plan with that of the mother country; but contended, that we nevertheless had a superintending power over them, and said, that he had diligently attended to the several charters granted to them, and could never, on the most impartial perusal, discover a single sentence contrary to the supreme superintending power which Great-Britain now claimed.

On Monday Messr. Lester and Davis attended, according to their summons, at the house of commons, to give the house such information as they required relative to the Newfoundland fishery; they went through their examination with great ease, and to the general satisfaction of the whole house. After which the blanks to restrain the New England fishery were filled up, and the bill was ordered to be engrossed.

March 10. Deputations are sent from hence to Boston, to try several persons in America.

We hear from Castleford, Nottinghamshire, that two troops of Elliot's light dragoons, quartered at that place, received orders for drafting five men out of each troop in order to go to America. When the officers acquainted the men, that they who chose to go might turn out, eighteen voluntarily offered themselves, and they are to cast lots which of them are to go.

Recruiting parties are sent to different parts of the kingdom to raise a number of men, that are to be incorporated in all the regiments of foot.

Extract of a letter from Cork, March 1.

"Most of the troops demanded for America are arrived here. Both officers and men never went upon an expedition with greater reluctance than on the present intended one. I shudder at the consequences of being obliged to fight against our fellow-subjects."

This morning upwards of 1200 drums were sent down the river, to be carried to the Downs, in order to be put on board the transports bound to America.

It is assured as a fact in the city, that the ministry have lately received some accounts from France and Spain, which have thrown them into great confusion, not knowing what steps are proper to be taken in so critical an affair; for that France has a large body of forces ready to make a descent upon Ireland, as soon as the forces are sent from thence to America, and that the Spaniards have a large fleet ready to attack some of the western islands, but it is generally believed that Jamaica is their principal object.

By the bill now depending for restraining the commerce and navigation of the American colonies, particularly their fishery, after reciting the former acts, by which such trade and navigation were permitted, it enacts, "That during the combinations and disorders which at this time prevail within the province of Massachusett's-Bay and New-Hampshire, and colonies of Connecticut and Rhode-Island, it being unfit that the inhabitants of the said provinces and colonies should enjoy the said privileges of trade to which his majesty's *obedient* subjects are intitled, after a time to be limited; and during the continuance of this act, no merchandises enumerated by former acts, being the manufacture of the above provinces; which are to be brought to some other British colony, or to Great-Britain; or any merchandise, which shall at that time have been imported into the said province or colonies, shall be shipped from any of the said provinces or colonies to any place whatsoever, other than to Great-Britain, or some of the British islands in the West-Indies; and that no other merchandises whatsoever, of the manufacture of the said provinces or colonies, or which shall at any time have been imported into the same, shall after the said limited time, be shipped from any of the said colonies to any place whatsoever, except Great-Britain or Ireland, or the British islands in the West-Indies, on forfeiture of ship and cargo.

Also, that after a limited time, and during this act, no sort of wines, salt, or any goods or commodities whatsoever (except horses, victuals, and linen cloth, the produce and manufacture of Ireland, and goods for victualling his majesty's ships, and for his majesty's forces or garrisons, or the produce of the British islands in the West-Indies) shall be imported on any pretence whatsoever, unless such goods be shipped in Great-Britain, and carried directly from thence, upon forfeiture of goods and vessel.

Likewise, that if any vessel, not belonging to Great-Britain or Ireland, or the islands of Guernsey or Jersey, shall be found, after the limited time, carrying on any fishery upon any part of North America, or having on board materials for such fishery, unless the master produce to the commander of any of his Majesty's ships of war stationed for the superintendance of the American fisheries, a certificate under the hand of the governor of the colonies of Quebec, Newfoundland, Saint John, Nova Scotia, New-York, New-Jersey, Pensylvania, Maryland, Virginia, North-Carolina, South-Carolina, Georgia, East Florida, or West-Florida, setting forth that such vessel hath cleared out from some one of the said colonies, and that she actually belongs to his Majesty's subjects, inhabitants of the said colony, it shall be lawful for any of the commanders of any of his Majesty's ships of war stationed for the protection of the fishery upon the coast of North-America, to seize and prosecute all such vessels, with a proviso, that nothing herein contained shall extend to any vessel belonging to the French nation, which shall be found fishing, and not carrying on any illicit trade.

These constraints to be discontinued, so soon as obedience to the laws shall be restored. Persons giving false certificates to be declared incapable of serving his majesty, and subject to other pains and penalties."

PHILADELPHIA.

Extract of a letter from New-York, April 19.

"This morning the snow Sir William Johnson, Capt. Dean, arrived here from London, but last from the Downs, in 31 days.---The intelligence he brings is not so agreeable as could be wished. The papers are as late as the 5th of March. Capt. Dean says, that 16 men of war and 95 transports are certainly coming out to America; he lay among them at Spithead; that terms would be first offered, that each government should annually raise a certain sum for the support of the fleet and army of Great-Britain; that complied with, in our own way, an amicable accommodation would soon follow."

ANNAPOLIS, *April* 27.

The general assembly of this province, is further prorogued to Monday the 5th day of June next.

The following was received yesterday, hand-bill, by express.

PHILADELPHIA, *April* 24, 1775.

An express arrived at five o'clock this evening, by which we have the following advices.

Watertown, Wednesday morning, near 10 *of the clock.*

TO all friends of American liberty, be it known, that this morning before break of day, a brigade consisting of about 1000 or 1,200 men landed at Phipp's farm, at Cambridge, and marched to Lexington, where they found a company of our colony militia in arms, upon whom they fired without any provocation, and killed six men, and wounded four others. By an express from Boston we find another brigade are now upon their march from Boston, supposed to be about 1000. The bearer, Trail Brissel is charged to alarm the country quite to Connecticut; and all persons are desired to furnish him with fresh horses, as they may be needed. I have spoken with several, who have seen the dead and wounded. Pray let the delegates from this colony to Connecticut see this, they know Col. Forster, one of the delegates.

J. PALMER, one of the committee.

A true copy from the original, per order of the committee of correspondence of Worcester, April 1775.

Attested and forwarded by the committees of Brookline, Norwich, New-London, Lyme, Saybrook, Killingsworth, E. Guilford, Guilford, Brandford, New-Haven.

Fairfield, Saturday, April 22, 8 *o'clock.*

Since the above-written we have received the following by a second express.

Thursday, 3 *o'clock afternoon, A. M.*

SIR,

I am this moment informed by an express from Woodstock, taken from the mouth of the express, then two of the clock, afternoon.---That the contest between the first brigade that marched to Concord, was still continuing this morning at the town of Lexington, to which said brigade had retreated, that another brigade had, said to be the second mentioned in the letter of this morning, landed with a quantity of artillery, at the place where the first did. The provincials were determined to prevent the two brigades from joining their strength if possible, and remain in great need of succour.